MARVEL PREVIEW FEATURING

02928

STAR-LORD

№18

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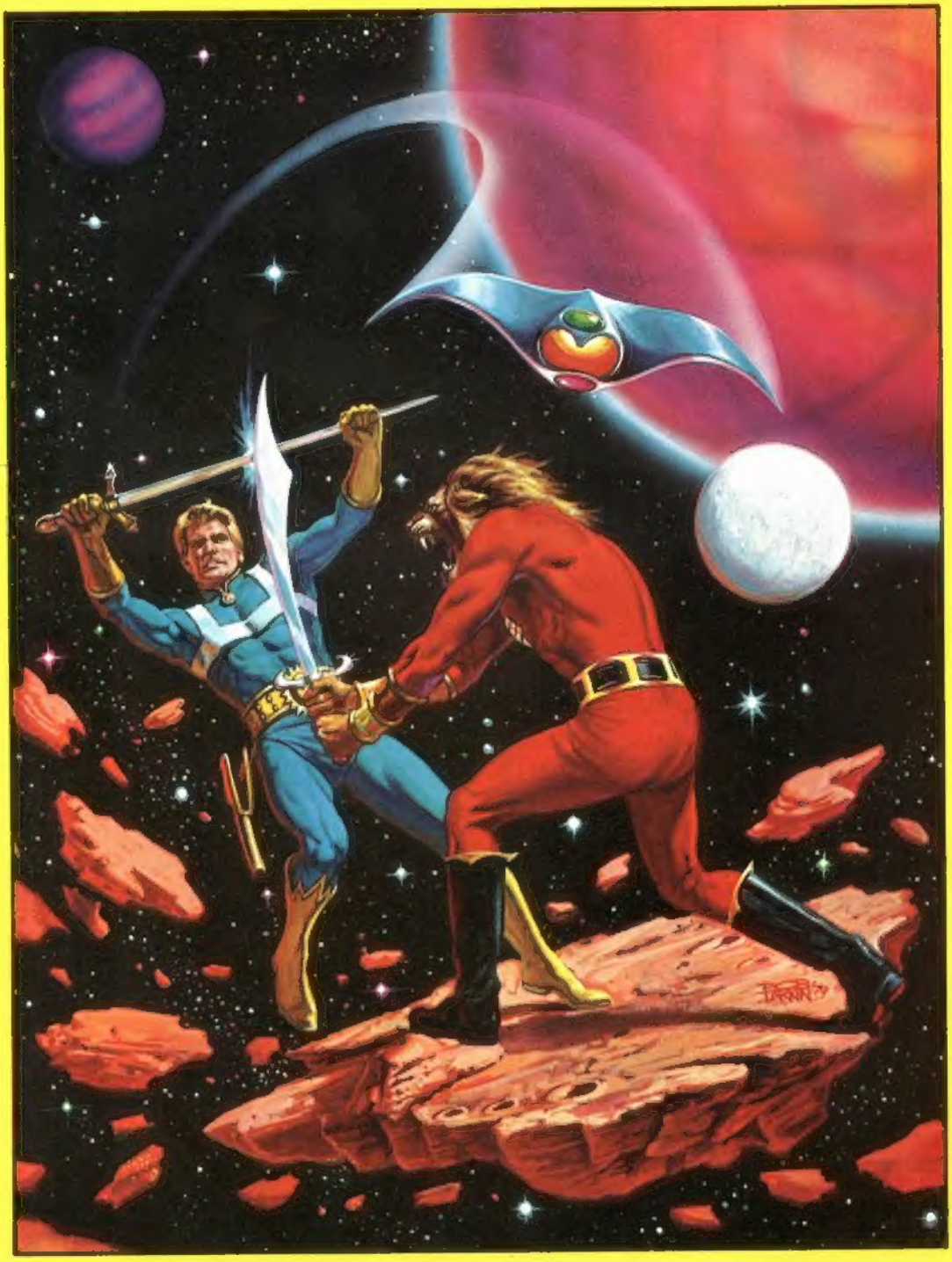
LIFE OR DEATH?

Peter Quill Faces the Most Agonizing Decision of His Cosmic Career!

Also:
Weird Time-Travel in "Destiny of the Dinosaurs!"

Frightening Future Vision: Ron Goulart's "Into the Shop"



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STAN LEE presents MARVEL PREVIEW #18 FEATURING

STAR-LORD

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A startling SF premise masterfully stretched to an awesome, unbelievable conclusion. By *Don Thompson* and *Lee Elias*.

★ ★ ★

The best of the old and the new.

Marvel Preview, one of the established favorites of our line, is in this issue experimenting with some wild black and white shading techniques—we know you'll notice and hope you'll love—and better paper to reproduce the artwork on.

Star-Lord, now an established character, enters in this issue a new phase of his career and *persona*: Here he finally shreds his space-sissy image and becomes a true Lord of the Stars—but not without the wrenching emotional traumas one would expect in a truly human hero.

Our back-up stories likewise continue the contrast: a piece of speculation about ancient dinosaurs and modern time-travel; an adaptation of an award-winning story by established master Ron Goulart, drawn by brand-newcomer Steve Bissette, destined to be a premier graphic storyteller.

Old and new. The best of both fantastic worlds. Enjoy! Richard Marschall.

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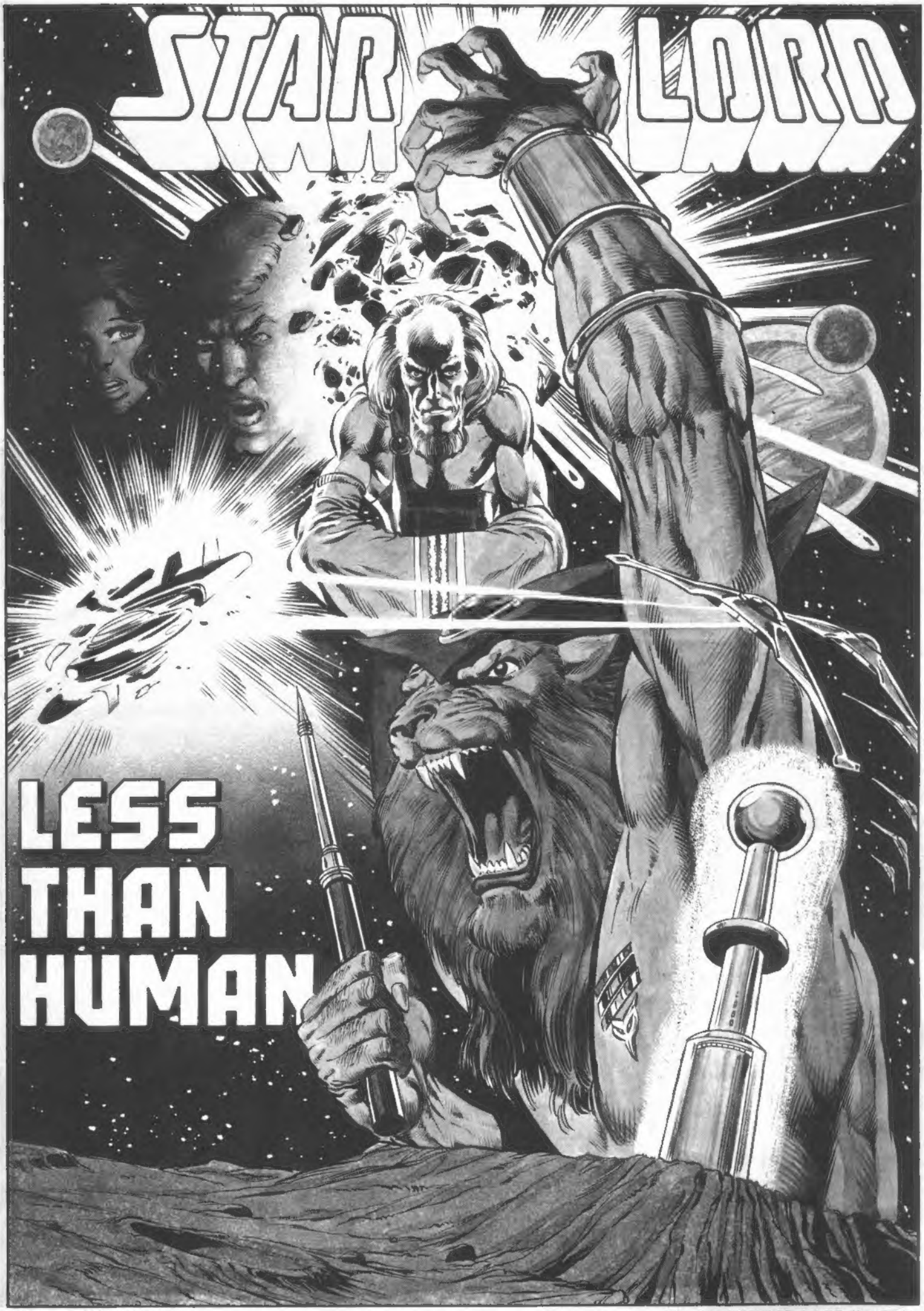


Script: DOUG MOENCH

Art: BILL SIENKIEWICZ & BOB McLEOD

PROLOGUE:
YOU'RE SURE YOU WANT TO TEST IT ON THE PLANETOID?
IF YOUR MISSION FAILS, YOU'LL HAVE NOWHERE TO--
IF OUR MISSION FAILS, WE WOULD RATHER DIE THAN LIVE ONE MORE DAY ON THAT STINKING BALL OF ROCK.
BEGIN THE TEST.
"YOU SEE, HUMAN, IT IS FITTING THAT THE PLACE ON WHICH WE'VE BEEN FORCED TO LIVE SINCE OUR ESCAPE--
"-- SHOULD NOW SERVE AS THE TEST FOR OUR RETURN, AND OUR VENGEANCE.
"WE ARE NOT PAINED TO SEE IT DESTROYED."
IT WORKED, HUMAN-- YOUR TEST WORKED.
OF COURSE-- I TOLD YOU IT WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL. I'VE WORKED TOO LONG ON THIS SYSTEM TO EVEN THINK OF FAILURE...

WITH THIS SMALL POWER-ROD INSTALLED IN THE WEAPON SYSTEM OF ANY STANDARD FIGHTER--YOU NOW POSSESS THE CAPABILITY TO DESTROY A WORLD.
THEN THE LONG WAIT IS OVER, HUMAN. IT IS TIME TO GATHER OUR OTHER FIGHTERS AND MOVE ON TO REDSTO--

BUHHHH

WE'RE UNDER ATTACK! THEY'VE FOUND US!

NO! THEY MUST NOT--
BOOM
--UHN!

THE LAST ATTACKER BLASTS-- AND THE CRAFT SHATTERS, SPILLING OXYGEN, BODIES, DEBRIS.

THE ATTACKERS MOVE IN LIKE CARRION BIRDS.
BOARDING MANEUVERS

AND SOON, INSIDE THE GUTTED CRAFT...
I'VE GOT IT, COMMANDER!
GOOD-- I'LL RADIO QUAN-ZARR WITH THE NEWS.
--IS BRINGING IT ABOARD RIGHT NOW, SIR.
EXCELLENT. I MAY HAVE LOST MY SON, AND ALL MY POWER IN THE TWELVE WORLDS, BUT NOW I HAVE THE MEANS TO RETURN TO POWER--
--AND TO CONQUER ALL.
BRING THE POWER-ROD BACK TO REDSTONE.
YES, QUAN-ZARR --WE'RE EN ROUTE NOW.
"BY THE WAY, SIR, THERE WAS ONE HUMAN ABOARD.
"WE HAD TO KILL THEM ALL."
YES, THE ENTIRE CREW IS DEAD--DEAD AND FLOATING AMONG WEIGHTLESS SWIRLS OF THEIR OWN BLOOD.
...BUT THERE WAS ONE WHO DID NOT DIE BEFORE REACHING THE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM...
OUTGOING TRANSMISSION: WEAPON COMPLETE BUT TAKEN BY QUAN-ZARR'S FORCES TO REDSTONE. CARRY ON WITHOUT US AND
END OF PROLOGUE.

REDSTONE, SOMETIME LATER: SEEN FROM SPACE, IT LOOKS INDEED LIKE A RED STONE SET ON GLITTERING BLACK YELVET...
PETER, I'VE PICKED UP EMANATIONS OF AN AWESOME BUT UNKNOWN POWER-SOURCE FROM THAT RED PLANET-- ENOUGH TO POWER, OR DESTROY, AN ENTIRE WORLD.
I GUESS WE'D BETTER CHECK IT OUT THEN, BUT WE DON'T WANT TO BARGE IN IF IT'S NONE OF OUR BUSINESS -- IF IT'S INNOCENT...
...SO JUST DROP ME OFF OVER THE CITY NEAREST TO THE DETECTED POWER-SOURCE --THEN LOCK INTO ORBIT UNTIL I CALL YOU.
OKAY, HERO.
AND, WHEN "SHIP" HAS LOCKED INTO ORBIT...
SO LONG, PETER -- AND HAPPY LANDINGS..
...PETER QUILL DRAMATICALLY BECOMES STAR-LORD.
FANTASTIC! A WALLED CITY-- BUT THE WALL IS NATURAL... THE RIM OF A HUGE CRATER! THE CITY IS BUILT ON THE PULVERIZED DUST OF A METEOR!
I WONDER IF THE POWER-SOURCE COULD BE INSIDE THE CITY -- THAT CENTRAL TOWER, PERHAPS...

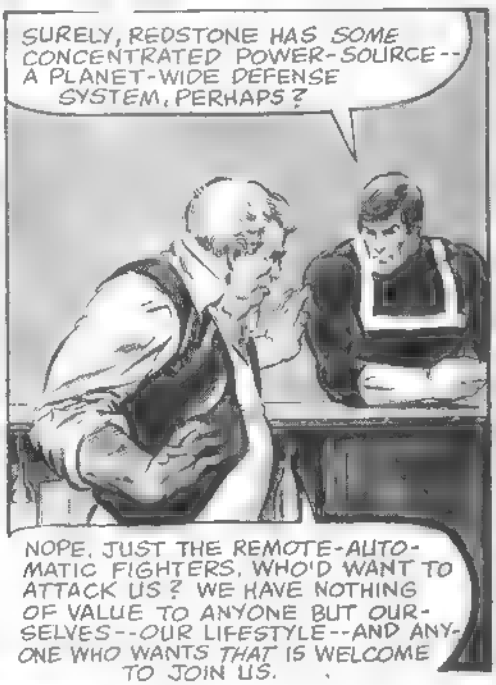
WAIT A MINUTE -- LOOKS LIKE I COULDN'T BE MORE WRONG. THE LIFESTYLE HERE IS PRIMITIVE -- TORCHES AND BEASTS OF BURDEN -- NO ELECTRICITY, NO VEHICLES, NO SIGNS OF ANY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY...
... EXCEPT THAT CENTRAL TOWER AGAIN -- EVEN ITS ARCHITECTURE IS INCONGRUOUS.
THEY'RE CAPABLE OF GENERATING ELECTRIC POWER BUT, WITH THE SINGLE EXCEPTION OF THE TOWER, THEY DO NOT.
IF THEY ARE INDEED USING ALMOST NO POWER, WHY "SHIP'S" READING OF AN ENORMOUS POWER-SOURCE?
LET'S HAVE IT, STRANGER.
YOUR GUN. WE'RE THE ONLY ONES ALLOWED POWER-WEAPONS HERE -- ALL OTHERS SETTLE THEIR DISPUTES WITH THE BLADE.
AN AIR-SKIMMER. SO AT LEAST THE POLICE USE TECHNOLOGY -- AGAINST WHICH I MIGHT BE OVERMATCHED WITHOUT MY ELEMENT-GUN...
DON'T BE A FOOL -- WE'LL SIMPLY KILL YOU IF YOU DON'T HAND OVER THE WEAPON.

COME ON, GIVE IT OVER--YOU CAN PICK IT UP ON YOUR WAY OFF-PLANET AT THE SPACEPORT-CUSTOMS--THAT CENTRAL TOWER BACK THERE. YOU SHOULD'VE ENTERED THROUGH THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE--LUCKY WE DON'T ADD A FINE FOR ILLEGAL ENTRY.
"WHEN IN ROME..." BESIDES, ONLY MY WILL-POWER CAN ACTIVATE THE GUN ANYWAY...
VERY WELL, BUT TELL ME--WHERE'S A GOOD PLACE TO PICK UP SOME LOCAL COLOR--GET TO KNOW THE LIFESTYLE OF YOUR FASCINATING PLANET HERE?
ANY TAVERN'LL DO. THE BOTTOMSIDE IS RIGHT DOWN THE STREET.
THANKS.
ANOTHER AIR-SKIMMER. MORE POLICE INSIDE?
BOTTOMSIDE
HM, NO POLICE--BUT TWO FELLOWS IN MILITARY OUTFITS.
A DRAUGHT OF SAPPHIRE WINE.
THANKS. I NOTICE YOU'VE FORSAKEN TECHNOLOGY BY AND LARGE. IS THAT BY CHOICE?
SURE--THE SIMPLE LIFE, BACK TO BASICS, NOTHING TO CLUTTER UP YOUR MIND AND EMOTIONS, FREEDOM TO LAUGH AND CRY IN A BIG WAY. WHO NEEDS THE GRIEF OF FUSION, FISSION, OR F.T.L.?
NO ELECTRICITY HERE, PAL, NO COMPUTERS, NO GUNS--
--NOTHING BUT WHAT A MAN CAN BUILD WITH HIS OWN TWO HANDS. EXCEPT IN THE PORTS, OF COURSE--THERE'S ONE PORT IN EACH CITY--AND ALSO IN QUAN-ZARR'S FORTRESS. HE'S GOT POWER THERE.

QUAN-ZARR?
THE FOUNDER OF REDSTONE--FIRST MAN TO SET FOOT ON IT MADE HIM RICH--HE OWNS THE WHOLE PLANET, INCLUDING THIS TAVERN. 'COURSE, I CAN'T COMPLAIN, TAXES ARE LOW ENOUGH.
BUT WHEN HE COLLECTS FROM EVERYBODY, HE CAN AFFORD TO KEEP 'EM LOW.

AND REDSTONE WAS UNCLAIMED BEFORE HE FOUND IT?
YEAH--SURPRISING, AIN'T IT?

DIDN'T THINK YOU COULD STILL FIND SUCH UNSPOILED TREASURES. 'COURSE, THAT WAS SIXTY CYCLES AGO, BUT STILL..


SURELY, REDSTONE HAS SOME CONCENTRATED POWER-SOURCE--A PLANET-WIDE DEFENSE SYSTEM, PERHAPS?
NOPE. JUST THE REMOTE-AUTOMATIC FIGHTERS. WHO'D WANT TO ATTACK US? WE HAVE NOTHING OF VALUE TO ANYONE BUT OURSELVES--OUR LIFESTYLE--AND ANYONE WHO WANTS THAT IS WELCOME TO JOIN US.

NOT MANY DO--MOST OF THE SO-CALLED "CIVILIZED" PLANETS THINK WE'RE A BUNCH OF CRAZIES AND ECCENTRICS. SO WHAT'VE WE GOT TO DEFEND AGAINST?
"SHIP", THERE'S HARDLY ANY POWER ON THIS PLANET AT ALL.

ARE YOU SURE YOUR SENSORS ARE FUNCTIONING PROPERLY.
SHIP'S TELEPATHIC REPLY IS HEARD ONLY BY STAR-LORD. I'M CERTAIN PETER AND THE READING IS POSITIVELY FRIGHTENING.

AND IT'S NOT A NATURAL FORCE?
NEGATIVE, PETER--EVEN AN ACTIVE VOLCANO WOULDN'T REGISTER A FRACTION OF THIS INTENSITY.
"ALL RIGHT--MAINTAIN YOUR ORBIT, AND I'LL DO A LITTLE MORE CHECKING ON MY OWN...
"...THEN I SUPPOSE WE'LL HAVE TO INVESTIGATE THE POWER-SITE ITSELF."
I APOLOGIZE FOR DISTURBING YOU, LORD QUAN-ZARR--BUT OUR MONITORS HAVE DETECTED AN UNIDENTIFIED SHIP LOCKED IN PLANET-ORBIT.
IT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A CLEAR THREAT, BUT--
YES, YES, I KNOW. AFTER OUR TROUBLE WITH THE BEASTMEN AND THE NEAR DISASTER WITH THIS POWER-ROD, WE CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL...
...DISPATCH THE REMOTE-AUTOMATIC FIGHTERS AND SCORCH THE DAMN SHIP OUT OF THE SKY...
BACK AT THE BOTTOMSIDE, STAR-LORD OVERHEARS A DRUNKEN CONVERSATION.
--WAIT'LL QUAN-ZARR HERE'S WHAT THE SPACE-PORT COMPUTERS HAD TO SAY.
ENOUGH DESTRUCTIVE POWER TO TURN THIS WHOLE PLANET INTO RED DUST. CLOSE CALL, ALL RIGHT...

YEAH, MAYBE WE BETTER GET MOVING WITH THE REPORT..
HELL, THERE'S NO HURRY NOW-- EVEN COURIERS NEED A DRINK NOW AND THEN. BESIDES THEY GOT THE THING SAFE AND SOUND AT THE--
KUHRAAK!
CHUTCH
THUTCH
QUICKLY--GET THE COURIER POUCH!
HEY! MY SWORD--!
SORRY...
...BUT I DO HAVE A WEAPON OF MY OWN-- AND I'VE JUST BECOME A CONTENDER FOR THAT COURIER POUCH!
BEASTMEN--?!! BUT HOW--
THEN YOU SHALL DIE, HUMAN!

THE POUCH MUST BE OURS, AND WE WILL KILL ANYONE WHO--
--UHN!
WAK
MYSELF, I'VE TAKEN A VOW AGAINST KILLING--
--BUT I'M NOT AVERSE TO SIMULATING A TEMPORARY FACSIMILE.
HYOK
AND NOW: ONE HARD-WON COURIER POUCH--
--COUPLED WITH A HASTY EXIT.
HEY, COME BACK HERE WITH MY SWORD!
AND THIS ALLEY LOOKS LIKE A CONVENIENT PLACE TO INVESTIGATE THE POUCH'S CONTENTS...
STOP, THIEF!

MEANWHILE, IN ORBIT...
WHAT'S TAKING PETER SO LONG TO--
WHAT THE--?!
UNDER ATTACK! TOO MANY OF THEM--GOT TO ABANDON ORBIT AND FLEE!
WIDGETS, GO FIND PETER AND AID HIM AS MUCH AS YOU CAN! TELL HIM I'LL BE THERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE--IF POSSIBLE.
ROGER, "SHIP"--WE'RE ON OUR WAY!
GO ON! YOU'RE TOO SMALL--
--TO DISTRACT THEM FROM THEIR MAIN TARGET!
--QUIET ABOUT YOUR SWORD! THIS IS IMPORTANT--I'VE GOT TO LEARN WHY THOSE TWO BEASTMEN KILLED FOR THIS POUCH. AND IF MY SUSPICIONS ARE CORRECT, IT MAY EVEN CONCERN THE FATE OF YOUR ENTIRE PLANET!
BUT YOU CAN'T JUST--
QUIET, PLEASE!
A TAPE... HEY, "SHIP"--I NEED YOUR HELP TO DECIPHER A COMPUTER TAPE. "SHIP"--? ARE YOU THERE?
WH-WHAT... ARE... YOU...?

THERE'S NO REPLY! WHAT COULD'VE HAPPENED TO HER?!
YOU... YOU'RE TALKING TO A SHIP... AND EXPECTING AN ANSWER?
"SHIP'S" COMMUNICATIONS ARE LOCKED DOWN FOR THE TIME BEING, PETER. ALL HER ATTENTION IS DEVOTED TO SURVIVAL RIGHT NOW--A MULTIPLE ATTACK.
ATTACK--?
THEN WE'RE ON OUR OWN, WIDGETS, AND I DON'T EVEN HAVE MY ELEMENT-WEAPON--NOTHING BUT THIS ANCIENT SWORD!
LET'S PLUG IN THIS COURIER-TAPE AND HEAR WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT...
KLIK
AN AIR-SKIMMER!
Do Inside
IT MUST HAVE BELONGED TO THE COURIERS! COME ON--
YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE THAT, BUSTER--IT'S MY SWORD, AND IF YOU DON'T GIVE IT BACK I'LL--
--WE'VE GOT TO FIND THE HUMAN WHO STOLE THE POUCH! IT'S THE ONLY CHANCE OF SUCCESS FOR OUR MISSION--
The Do Inside
--AND WE CAN'T LET IT SLIP AWAY AGAIN!
STANDARD TAPE, PETER. COMPRISED OF: DESTINATION; MISSION; RESULTS OF MISSION; AND RETURN DESTINATION
DETAILS, WIDGET--DETAILS!

DESTINATION: MAIN COMPUTERS LOCATED IN CITY'S SPACEPORT.
RESULT OF MISSION: EXHAUSTIVE COMPUTER SPECIFICATIONS FOR WHAT CAN ONLY BE CALLED THE ULTIMATE WEAPON, PETER, AN AMPLIFIER ROD OF ENORMOUS POWER.
AND RETURN DESTINATION: PRECISELY MATCHES THE LOCATION COORDINATES PINPOINTED BY "SHIP" AS THE SITE OF THE POWER-BLEED -- WHICH IS NOT FAR FROM THIS CITY, AS YOU KNOW.
THEN GUIDE ME THERE, WIDGETS TO THE POWER-ROD...
YOU MEAN GUIDE US THERE -- IT'S MY WORLD AND I DEMAND TO GO WITH YOU!
NOW WAIT JUST A--
BETTER DECIDE QUICKLY, PETER--
--BECAUSE HERE COME THE BEASTMEN AND THEY'VE GOT A SKIMMER AND THE SKIMMER'S GOT A--
--WEAPON!
ALL RIGHT --GO WIDGETS!
HEY, PUT ME DOWN!
NOT A CHANCE, LADY... I'VE ALREADY MENTIONED THAT I DON'T ENGAGE IN KILLING -- AND PUTTING YOU DOWN AT THIS POINT WOULD AMOUNT TO KILLING YOU NOW WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME WHO THESE BEASTMEN ARE, ANYWAY
THE "LADY" IS NAMED SYLVANA.

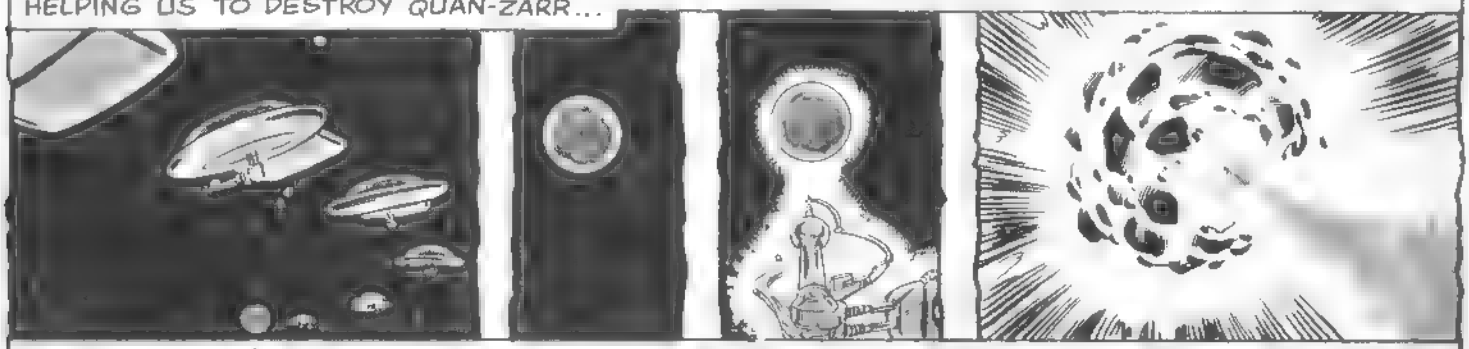
AS FOR THE BEAST MEN--
LOOK! THEY'RE FLYING!
"--THEY'RE EVIL.
"AS A CHILD I'D HEARD ABOUT THEM, BUT ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS MERE MYTH.
"NOW WHO ARE YOU?"
STAR-LORD.
"MODEST, AREN'T WE?"
"JUST FORTHRIGHT--I DIDN'T PICK THE NAME. NOW TELL ME MORE ABOUT THE "MYTH" ON OUR TAILS."
SUPPOSEDLY, THE BEASTMEN APPEARED IN OUR CITIES ONE DAY ABOUT THIRTY CYCLES AGO-- NO ONE KNOWS FROM WHERE--AND STARTED KILLING PEOPLE ON SIGHT.
QUAN-ZARR'S POLICE QUASHED THEIR RAMPAGE, KILLING ALL OF THEM-- OR SO I WAS TOLD...
...BUT OBVIOUSLY AT LEAST TWO OF THEM ESCAPED, AND NOW THEY'RE BACK--KILLING OUR PEOPLE AGAIN.
KILLING TWO OF QUAN-ZARR'S COURIERS, ANYWAY -- AND FOR A DEFINITE PURPOSE... BUT SO FAR HARDLY THE KIND OF INDISCRIMINATE SLAUGHTER YOUR "MYTH" DESCRIBES.
THE CHASE SWOOPS UP OVER THE CRATER-RIM, OUT OF THE CONTAINED CITY.

AND FINALLY ONTO THE BLEAK DARKLING TERRAIN BEYOND
FASTER, WIDGETS! WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE POWER-SOURCE FASTER!
THAT SKIMMER'S GETTING CLOSE ENOUGH FOR ANOTHER--
AGH--!
THE POUCH-- NOW--OR SHE DIES!
WUMP
NO, STAR-LORD! KEEP THE POWER-ROD AWAY FROM THEM--DESTROY IT--BEFORE THEY CAN USE IT TO--
DON'T LISTEN TO HER, OR WE'LL--
ALL RIGHT!
EVEN WITH ONLY A SWORD, I COULD PROBABLY SAVE SYLVANA--
--BUT IT'D MEAN KILLING THEM!
HERE!
NO. . WHY DIDN'T YOU KEEP GOING? MY LIFE DIDN'T MATTER, NOT COMPARED TO ALL THE LIVES OF--
SILENCE! YOU'VE MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE, HUMAN!
FEEDING THE TAPE INTO THE COMPUTER SLOT AND LEARNING WHAT THEY WISH TO KNOW
THE POWER-ROD IS IN QUAN-ZARR'S FORTRESS-- AND THERE IT IS, IN SIGHT! AT LAST WE SHALL FACE HIM AGAIN!
AND YOU ALMOST DENIED US THE CHANCE!
THE CHANCE FOR WHAT? TO COMMIT ATROCITY--SLAUGHTER?

ATROCITY?! SLAUGHTER?! WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF SUCH THINGS?! LOOK AT US. AND SEE THE TRUE LEGACY OF SLAUGHTER AND ATROCITY! WE WERE NOT ALWAYS LIKE THIS, FOOL -- NOT UNTIL QUAN-ZARR ENTERED THE LIVES OF OUR MOTHERS AND FATHERS!
WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I MEAN THAT WHEN QUAN-ZARR LOST HIS POWER-POSITION AMONG THE TWELVE-WORLDS, AND HAD TO SLINK AWAY IN DEFEAT, HE CAME HERE TO OUR WORLD OF REDSTONE -- AND HE TOOK IT OUT ON US...
"...ON OUR MOTHERS AND FATHERS, WHO WERE DEDICATED TO PEACE -- AND DEFENSELESS! HE NEEDED A NEW BASE FROM WHICH HE COULD REBUILD HIS POWER, AND REDSTONE WAS THE EASIEST TO TAKE! HE DESTROYED OUR GLEAMING CITIES, SHATTERED OUR CULTURE OF PEACE, AND STOLE OUR PLANET FOR HIS OWN!
"YES, OUR ANCESTORS WERE HUMAN, JUST LIKE YOU, FROM THE SAME COMMON STOCK WHICH IS SO PREVALENT IN THE UNIVERSE -- AND QUAN-ZARR VERY NEARLY SLAUGHTERED EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM!
"BUT HE WAS NOT UTTERLY WITHOUT MERCY HE ALLOWED A HANDFUL OF OUR RACE TO SURVIVE -- AND THREW THEM LIKE BONES TO HIS SCIENTISTS, WHO USED THEM -- OUR PARENTS -- AS 'SUBJECTS' IN THEIR RESEARCH ON GENETIC ENGINEERING! AND WHEN THE GENES WERE SUFFICIENTLY ALTERED, THE 'SUBJECTS' WERE BRED LIKE ANIMALS -- SO THE SCIENTISTS COULD EXAMINE THE RESULTS OF THEIR EUGENICS EXPERIMENTS!

"AND THE RESULTS WERE ANIMALS--US--BEASTMEN!"
WE MATURED, SOME 500 OF US, AND WE ESCAPED HIS ZOO-LIKE CAPTIVITY--BUT ONLY BECAUSE QUAN-ZARR'S SON HELPED US. SOME OF US WENT BERSERK, KILLING IN THE STREETS, AND MOST WERE THEMSELVES KILLED.

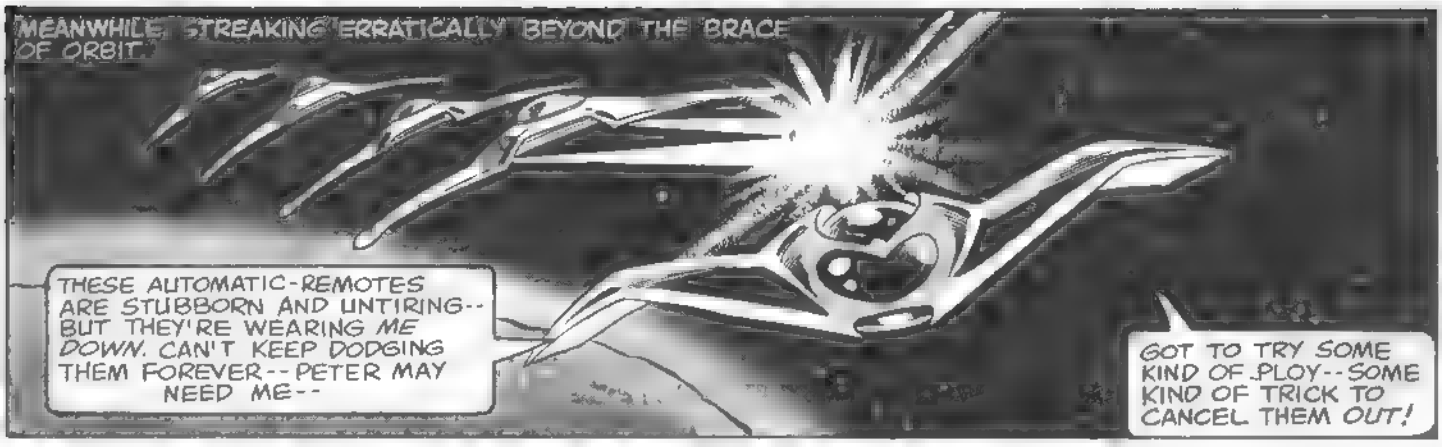
"AGAIN, IT WAS HIS SON WHO SAVED THE LAST 27 SURVIVORS--HELPED US ESCAPE REDSTONE COMPLETELY, TO LIVE ON A MISERABLE PLANETOID TWO STAR-LEAGUES AWAY, A PLANETOID NOW DESTROYED THE SON *KNEW* HIS FATHER WAS EVIL, AND SOUGHT TO RELIEVE HIS OWN GUILT BY HELPING US TO DESTROY QUAN-ZARR...



"HE PROVIDED US WITH A HALF-DOZEN FIGHTERS, FIVE OF WHICH YET REMAIN. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY THAN THAT, QUAN-ZARR'S SON USED HIS GENIUS (WHICH HIS FATHER HAD COUNTED ON TO REBUILD HIS OWN POWER) TO PROVIDE US WITH THE MEANS TO DESTROY AN ENTIRE WORLD...

"...TO BUILD FOR US THE *POWER-ROD* QUAN-ZARR'S SON IS DEAD NOW...
"...BUT THE LAST OF OUR FELLOW BEASTMEN ARE EN ROUTE NOW IN THE FIVE FIGHTERS, TO RENDEZVOUS WITH US FOR THE LOCATION OF THE *POWER-ROD*..."
THEN *WE* SHALL DESTROY QUAN-ZARR'S RACE JUST AS HE DESTROYED *OURS*--JUST AS HIS SOLDIERS DESTROYED HIS *OWN* SON TO STEAL THE POWER-ROD FROM US!
I...I HAD NO IDEA! I WAS ALWAYS TOLD YOU WERE...EVIL!
YOU LIE!--TO COVER UP YOUR *OWN* EVIL!!

I SWEAR TO YOU -- WE THOUGHT THIS PLANET WAS UN-POPULATED BEFORE QUAN-ZARR INVITED PIONEERS TO COLONIZE IT!
SHE'S TELLING THE TRUTH. QUAN-ZARR AND HIS SOLDIERS MAY BE YOUR ENEMY, BUT I'M CONVINCED THE PEOPLE HERE ARE INNOCENT, AND I'M SURE THEY'D WELCOME YOU BACK IF--
SILENCE!
NOW YOU HAVE ONLY A BRIEF TIME IN WHICH YOU MAY ESCAPE, OFF-WORLDER. SINCE YOU DO NOT SHARE RED-STONE'S LEGACY OF BLOOD AND ATROCITY, YOU DO NOT DESERVE TO DIE WITH THE GIRL AND THE REST OF HER RACE...
LEAVE WHILE YOU CAN -- FOR WE GO, NOW, TO THE FORTRESS
USE THE SKIMMER RADIO TO CALL DOWN OUR FIGHTERS.
TOO LATE IT'S OVER
HEAL HER ARM, WIDGETS -- STOP THE BLEEDING
HEAL IT? BUT HOW?
LASER-SURGERY, MADAM, LACED WITH ANTI-BIOTICS -- A SIMPLE CLEANSE AND CAUTERIZE OPERATION.
OUCH. TH-THANKS
BUT... WHAT NOW? WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
I... REALLY DON'T KNOW.


MEANWHILE, STREAKING ERRATICALLY BEYOND THE BRACE OF ORBIT...
THESE AUTOMATIC-REMOTES ARE STUBBORN AND UNTIRING-- BUT THEY'RE WEARING *ME* DOWN. CAN'T KEEP DODGING THEM FOREVER-- PETER MAY NEED ME--
GOT TO TRY SOME KIND OF PLOY-- SOME KIND OF TRICK TO CANCEL THEM OUT!

AND, NOW OVERLOOKING QUAN-ZARR'S FORTRESS...
LOOK! THE FIVE FIGHTERS-- THEY'RE *HERE!* THEY'RE TRYING A SNEAK ATTACK ON THE FORTRESS! YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THEM BEFORE--
I CAN'T, SYLVANA! I'VE SWORN NEVER TO KILL OR--
KILLING IS A WAY OF *LIFE!* ON RED-STONE, WE'VE *LEARNED* THAT BITTER FACT-- SOMETHING YOU ON THE MORE "ADVANCED" WORLDS SEEM TO HAVE *FORGOTTEN*--
-- UNTIL DEATH COMES UP AND STABS YOU IN THE *HEART!*

"YOU MUST KILL TO EAT-- KILL TO SURVIVE! IT'S AN INBUILT PART OF THE UNIVERSE'S SCHEME!
"IF YOU'RE ATTACKED, YOU MUST KILL TO PRESERVE YOUR OWN LIFE!
"DON'T YOU UNDER-STAND?! KILLING SHOULD NEVER BE *WANTON*-- BUT WHEN IT *IS*, IT MUST NOT BE *IGNORED!*"

LISTEN TO ME! NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU *PITY* THOSE BEASTMEN--
--IF YOU DON'T STOP THEM, NOW, BEFORE THEY GET THE POWER-ROD, THEN WE WILL *ALL* DIE!

EVERYONE ON THIS PLANET-- MOST OF WHOM ARE *INNOCENT*-- WILL *DIE!!* AND *YOU* WILL BE AIDING IN THEIR *MURDER*-- IN THE SLAUGHTER OF *MILLIONS!!*
THE WORDS STRIKE HOME, DEEPLY HOME, AND STAR-LORD IS CHILLED... WHILE PETER QUILL IS *HORRIFIED*
HE STARES DOWN AT THE FORTRESS, HIS EYES PANICKING AT THE SIGHT--
THE ASSAULT AND DEFENSE THE ATTACK AND COUNTER-ATTACK THE SLAMMED FORTRESS AND CRASHING FIGHTERS THE SMOKE EXPLOSIONS, CARNAGE THE SOLDIERS BLASTED FROM THE RAMPARTS FALLING IN SCREAMS THE SHRIEK OF SHATTERED
IT HAS ALL HAPPENED TOO FAST AND HE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO STOP IT AND IT SHAKES HIM TO THE CORE OF MANY DOUBTS.
IT TAKES HIM BACK TO OTHER VIOLENCE, OTHER HORRORS ALL SCREAMING FROM THE DARK CORNERS OF HIS MEMORY
BACK TO THE MURDER OF HIS MOTHER AND HIS OBSESSION WITH VENGEANCE TO THE ONE WHO MADE HIM STAR-LORD AND TAUGHT HIM THAT HIS OBSESSION WAS WRONG BUT WHO SAID NOTHING ABOUT THE MORALITY OF KILLING IN *OTHER* SITUATIONS INDEED WHO GAVE HIM A WEAPON CAPABLE OF KILLING TO BE USED AS HIS CONSCIENCE DICTATED BUT CAN HIS CONSCIENCE EVER DICTATE A SITUATION IN WHICH KILLING IS *RIGHT?*

WILL IT TAKE THE DEATH OF AN ENTIRE CITY -- SWALLOWED WHOLE AS THE PLANET IS RIPPED APART INTO THE COLLAPSE OF THE CRATER THAT ONCE PROTECTED IT?
HOW MANY INNOCENTS FLEEING, SCREAMING CRUSHED BY AN UNKNOWN FORCE WIELDED BY AN UNKNOWN ENEMY?
YES... HOW MANY WILL IT TAKE?
ALREADY HUNDREDS ARE DEAD PERHAPS NONE OF THEM INNOCENT BUT ALL OF THEM VERY DEAD
THE FORTRESS HAS FALLEN THREE BEAST-MEN REMAIN ALIVE THEY ENTER, IN SEARCH OF THE POWER-ROD WHICH WILL KILL ALL THE REST, THE REST WHO ARE INNOCENT
SYLVANA IS NEARLY DRAINED, BUT FAR FROM FINISHED
YOU REFUSED TO KILL THEM BEFORE, ON THE PLAIN--
--AND LOOK WHAT YOUR DECISION HAS LED TO! TENFOLD DEATH BELOW US AND MORE TO COME-- IF YOU DON'T FORGET ABOUT YOUR STUPID, SELFISH VOW AND STOP THEM!!
Y-YES
I BEG YOU-- SAVE MY PLANET-- SAVE MY PEOPLE-- SAVE THE INNOCENTS!
HAS FINALLY COME UP AND STABBED HIM IN THE HEART

HE KNOWS HE WILL NEVER RECOVER. BUT HE ALSO KNOWS THERE IS A WORSE KIND OF MALAISE. NOT OF THE HEART BUT OF THE SOUL.
HIS DECISION TO SAVE ONE LIFE, SYLVANA'S, AND TO SPARE TWO OTHERS, THE BEASTMEN, HAS JEOPARDIZED MILLIONS. IT WAS THE WORST DECISION OF HIS LIFE.
QUICKLY--THE POWER-ROD WILL BE IN QUAN-ZARR'S PERSONAL CHAMBER. WE MUST--
--AGHH!
AT LEAST ONE OF QUAN-ZARR'S SOLDIERS STILL LIVES.
IF ONLY BRIEFLY.
NOW ONLY TWO BEASTMEN REMAIN--THE TWO WHOSE LIVES WERE SPARED BY A LORD FROM THE STARS!
"SHIP" IS NEARLY EXHAUSTED.
MY LAST CHANCE--GOT TO MANEUVER THEM UNTIL THEY *SURROUND* ME, AND CONVERGE FOR THE KILL...!
QUAN-ZARR'S PERSONAL CHAMBERS. THE LAST SOLDIER FALLS, TAKING ONE OF THE BEASTMEN WITH HIM.
NO--!
NOW EACH SIDE BOASTS BUT ONE.

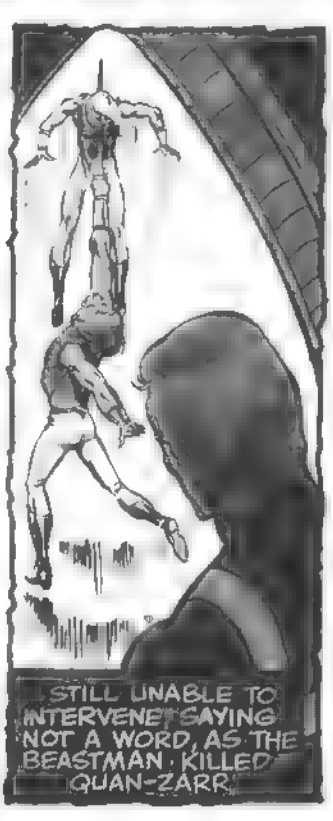
YES, QUAN-ZARR. LOOK AT MY FACE, MURDERER-- THE FACE YOU CREATED-- THE LAST FACE YOU WILL EVER SEE.
N-NO... NO!
NOOOO!!
BUT QUAN-ZARK IS AN OLD MAN LIVING IN TERROR AT THE END OF THE LINE. HIS WEAPON-HAND TREMBLES AND THE BEASTMAN IS AGILE
EXTREMELY AGILE
"SHIP" IS SURROUNDED. THE REMOTE AUTOMATIC FIGHTERS CONVERGE FOR AN EASY KILL
BUT WINKING, SHIP GOES INVISIBLE. THE ATTACKING SENSORS FASTEN ON NEW TARGETS. THE ONLY ONES AVAILABLE
AND "SHIP" REAPPEARS FAR FROM THEIR MEETING.
BIINGO.
THE BLADE GLITTERS INTO A LONG LOW GWOOP. THEN, WITH SUPREME VENGEANCE SHOOTS UPWARD IN A FINAL VICIOUS THRUST. QUAN-ZARR IS DEAD BEFORE HIS WEAPON CLACKS TO THE FLOOR. AND YET, THE BEAST MAN'S OBSESSION IS NOT YET QUELLED.
IN THE GUTTED FORTRESS A BESTIAL HAND REACHES FOR THE ULTIMATE
ULTIMATE POWER
LEAVE IT. QUAN-ZARR IS DEAD. IT'S ENOUGH.

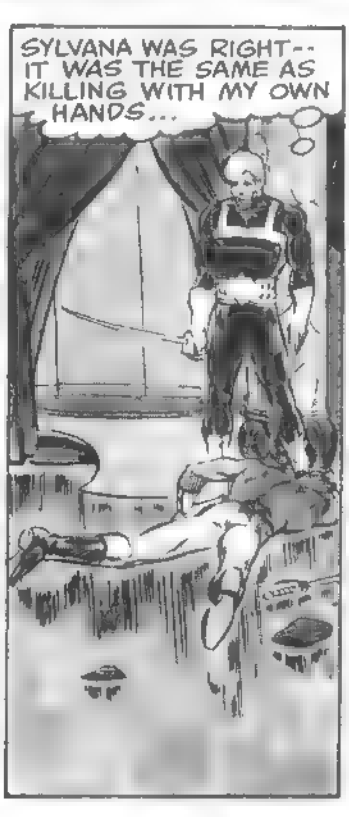
YOU--?!!
YOU'RE THE LAST SURVIVOR OF YOUR RACE. DON'T MAKE ME KILL YOU.
THE BEASTMAN QUIVERS WITH A RAGE SO BESTIAL THAT IT BECOMES HUMAN.
NO--MY RACE NO LONGER EXISTS. I AM ONLY A MOCKERY OF THAT RACE--THE RACE OF PROUD, PEACEFUL PEOPLE HE SLAUGHTERED...
...I DEMAND THE RIGHT TO SLAUGHTER HIS!
THE BEASTMAN LUNGES, FORCING IT. FORCING THE FIGHT PETER QUILL KNEW WOULD BE INEVITABLE...
AND SO IT BEGINS, WITH A PRIMAL CLASH OF NAKED STEEL... AND IN A PALACE OF LUXURY AND SPLENDOR, THEY WILL PLAY IT OUT... THE GRIM, DARK, AND DIRTY BUSINESS OF DEATH

AFTER ALL THE SPRAWLING CARNAGE THE WHOLESALE DEATH ENGINEERED BY SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGY IT COMES DOWN TO THIS THE TWO OF THEM
THE POWER-ROD IS MINE, OFF-WORLDER, THOUGH I CANNOT YET DRAW UPON ITS VAST POWER I WILL STILL CONQUER LEGIONS TO KEEP IT.
IT COMES DOWN TO THE THRESHOLD OF MADNESS. FOR STAR-LORD IS ALREADY THE LOSER
THE LOSER BECAUSE HE THOUGHT HE HAD ATTAINED A PLANE HIGHER THAN KILLING
... AND NOW HE HAS GLIMPSED THE PLANE BEYOND.. WHERE KILLING IS THE ONLY HUMANE CHOICE.
IS THE BEAST TOO MUCH OF AN OPPONENT FOR YOU, HUMAN?
OR DO YOU WEEP FOR THE BEAST FOUND IN YOUR OWN BREAST?
IT IS THIS REALIZATION, THIS DISILLUSIONMENT THAT PLACES HIM IN MORTAL DANGER
FAR GREATER THAN THAT FROM HIS OPPONENT'S BLADE

AND FINALLY, IT COMES DOWN TO THIS: THE UNTHINKABLE.
A HIDEOUS MOMENT FROZEN FOREVER IN A JAGGED CRYSTAL OF TIME, EVER MARKING THE TURNING POINT.
THE TURNING POINT--A PHRASE NOW REVERTING TO ITS ORIGINAL, GHASTLY MEANING...
THE TURNING POINT OF STAR-LORD'S LIFE...
...AND OF A BEASTMAN'S DEATH.

AND YET, THIS LAST MOVE THE CREATURE WILL EVER MAKE--THIS LONG SLOW SLUMP TOWARD DEATH--DOES NOT MARK THE PASSAGE.
THE REAL TURNING POINT WAS PASSED TEN MINUTES EARLIER, WHEN HE STOOD IN THE DOORWAY AND WATCHED...


STILL UNABLE TO INTERVENE, SAYING NOT A WORD, AS THE BEASTMAN KILLED QUAN-ZARR.


SYLVANA WAS RIGHT--IT WAS THE SAME AS KILLING WITH MY OWN HANDS...

...IF NOT WORSE.

EPILOGUE SHIP HAS ARRIVED FINALLY, TOO LATE TO HELP TO LATE TO STEM THE INEVITABLE IT WAS HER ENERGY THAT LAID OPEN THE GRAVE
THE BROKEN POWER-ROD WAS PETER QUILL'S DOING.
LATER, WHEN BOTH BEASTMAN AND OBSESSION HAVE BEEN SEALED FROM THE SUN TWO FIGURES WALK SLOWLY BACK TO SHIP THENCE TO THE CRATERED CITY SYLVANA'S VOICE IS WISE ENOUGH TO BE SOFT
I WANT TO THANK YOU, STAR-LORD YOU'VE DONE MORE FOR MY WORLD THAN ANYONE SHOULD EVER BE ASKED TO DO...
YOU... YOU'VE DESTROYED YOURSELF...
...OR AT LEAST WHAT YOU WERE AND NOW YOU MUST PICK UP THE PIECES AND TRY TO SHAPE A NEW SELF -- ONE YOU CAN STILL LIVE WITH.
SHE'S RIGHT, PETER...
I SENSE THAT YOU'RE A VERY DIFFERENT PERSON, NOW...
...OR PERHAPS SIMPLY COME TO ACCEPT THE PERSON YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN WE HAVE A LOT TO TALK ABOUT.
PERHAPS, "SHIP"... BUT FIRST COMES THE THINKING. PLEASE I'VE GOT A LOT TO THINK ABOUT.
AND IF THE TRAGIC BEING HE HAS SLAIN WAS LESS THAN HUMAN, AND YET SO MUCH MORE, THEN PERHAPS HE IS THE SAME MORE OR LESS

THE END. 31

Prologue:

THE FAR FUTURE, A DISTANT PLANET...
...WITH ALL THE TRAPPINGS OF ADVANCED CIVILIZATION...
...INCLUDING DRIVE-INS AND...
OH, LORD!
EASY, IT'S JUST MY LAWAGON.
WHAT'S IT DOING TO HIM?

INTO THE SHOP

Script: RON GOULART
Art: STEVE BISSETTE & RICK VEITCH

HERE'S A LAW BUREAU ANNOUNCEMENT SHELDON KLOOG, NOTORIOUS KILLER HAS JUST BEEN CAPTURED BY LAWAGON 203.
TRIAL HAS BEEN HELD, A VERDICT OF GUILTY BROUGHT IN AND THE DEATH SENTENCE CARRIED OUT. THANK YOU.

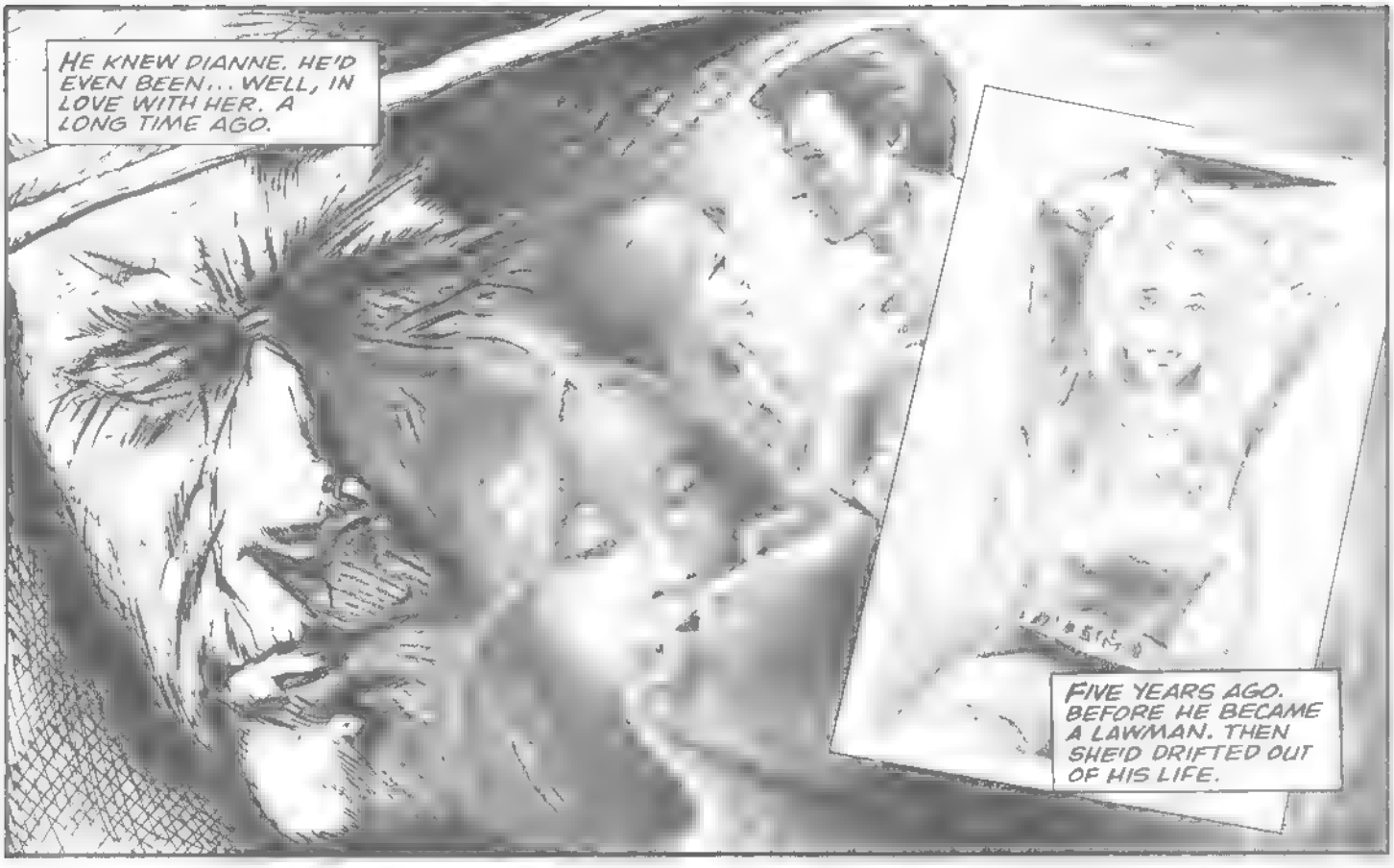
MARSHAL CLEMENS FLASHES HIS ID PACKET...
...AND GIVES THE DAY'S PASSWORD AND OATH OF FEALTY.

GOOD JOB, 203
HOW'D YOU SPOT KLOOG?
SAW HIM SKULKING TOWARD THE CAFE, SIR. HE WASN'T EVEN DISGUISED.

RIGHT HERE, SIR
EARTHLY REMAINS OF SHELDON KLOOG

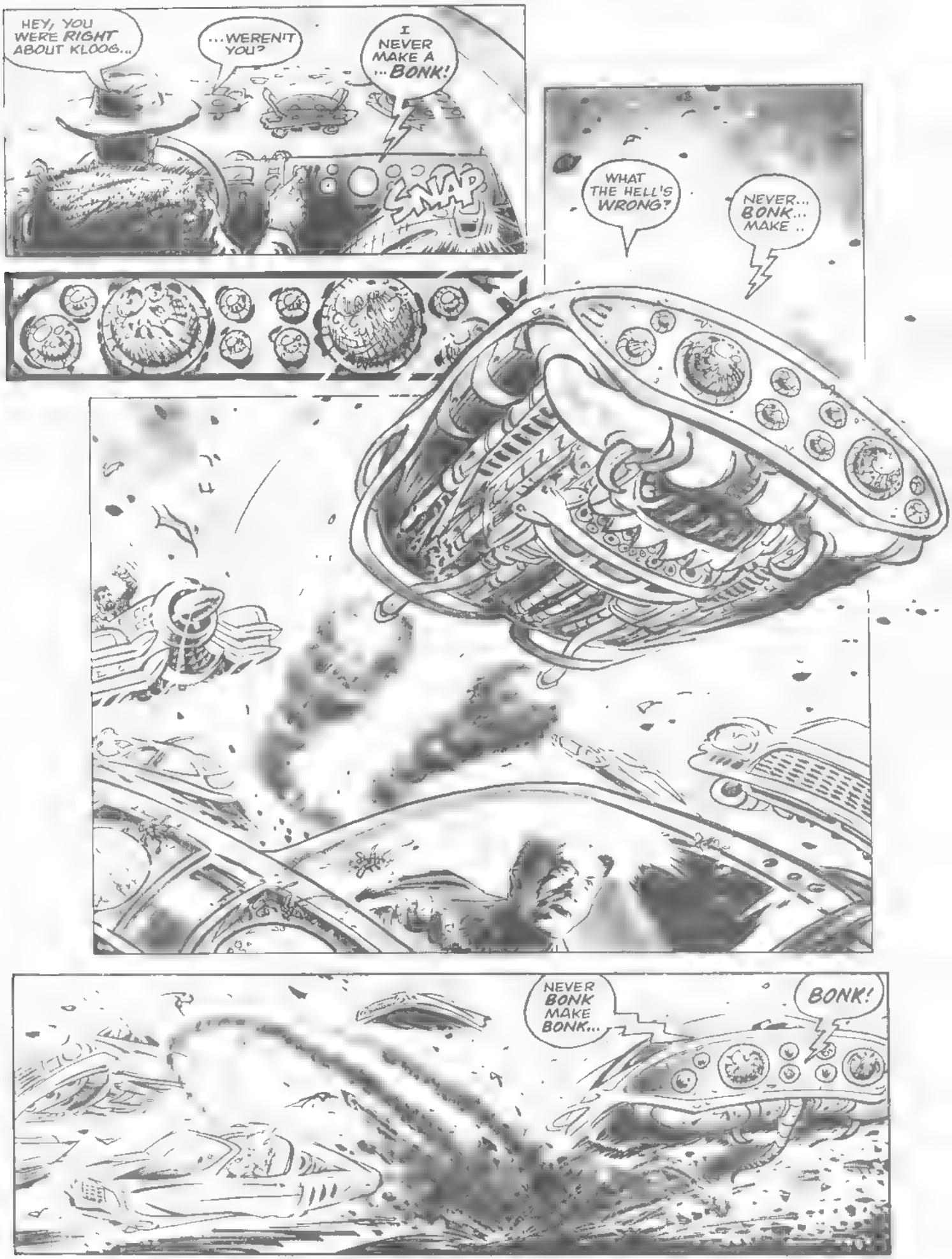
OKAY, DID YOU TRANSMIT EVERYTHING TO THE OFFICE...
...PHOTOS, PRINTS, RETINAL PATTERNS?
SURE, PLUS A FULL TRANSCRIPT OF THE TRIAL... IN TRIPLI-CATE.
KLOOG
WE'VE BEEN HUNTING KLOOG A LONG TIME.
GLAD WE FINALLY GOT HIM.
NOW LET'S HEAD FOR THE HUB.
RIGHTO, SIR
BY THE WAY, THERE'S A SHADE TOO MUCH TREBLE IN YOUR VOICE
OOPS... TESTING, TESTING. BETTER, SIR?
YEAH, FINE.
NOW GET ME JUNIOR MARSHAL KEPLING AT THE OFFICE.

KEPLING, SEND COPIES OF ALL THE KLOOG MATERIAL TO LAW BUREAU CENTRAL.
AL-READY DID, BUT--
GZZZZZK!
ANY NEW JOBS TO HANDLE?
SOME TROUBLE IN TOWNTEN. A SEX CRIME.
INVOLVES A GIRL NAMED DIANNE MARMON WHO--
DID YOU SAY DIANNE MARMON?
RIGHT, KNOW HER?
NEVER-MIND, TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED!
YEAH, IT IS HER!
SHE WAS GRABBED FROM HER APARTMENT. PRINTS FOUND INDICATE A GUY NAMED JIM OTTERSON TOOK HER.
HE'S BEEN SUSPECTED OF THIS KIND OF STUFF BEFORE. HE MAY BE VIOLENT THIS TIME!


HE KNEW DIANNE. HE'D EVEN BEEN... WELL, IN LOVE WITH HER. A LONG TIME AGO.
FIVE YEARS AGO. BEFORE HE BECAME A LAWMAN. THEN SHE'D DRIFTED OUT OF HIS LIFE.

I'LL HANDLE THIS ONE MYSELF!
WE'LL HEAD FOR TOWNTEN. KEEP ME FILLED IN, KEPLING.

LISTEN, THERE'S ONE OTHER THING...
NO, ABOUT SHELDON KLOOG... CENTRAL SAYS HE'S STILL AT LARGE!
ABOUT THE GIRL?
LIKE HELL! WE CAUGHT HIM!
BUT NONE OF THE STUFF YOU SENT MATCHES HIS ID PATTERN!
IMPOSSIBLE! THIS CAR DOESN'T MAKE MISTAKES!


HEY, YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT KLOOG...
...WEREN'T YOU?
I NEVER MAKE A ...BONK!
SNAP
WHAT THE HELL'S WRONG?
NEVER... BONK... MAKE ..
NEVER BONK MAKE BONK...
BONK!

COME ON, COME ON...
RESPOND, DAMN IT!
KUNG!!
NO USE, NOTHING'S WORKING.
I CAN'T EVEN SIGNAL FOR HELP.
GOING TO GIVE YOU ONE MORE CHANCE.
YOU GOING TO START?
THE LAWAGON COULDN'T HAVE MADE A MISTAKE ABOUT KLOOG.
CLEMENS PHONES FOR A REPAIR MAN AND WAITS...
I'VE BEEN MARSHAL NEARLY TWO YEARS AND WE'VE NEVER BEEN WRONG.
STILL THE WAY THE CAR'S BEEN FUNCTIONING... AND NOW THIS UNEXPLAINED BREAKDOWN.

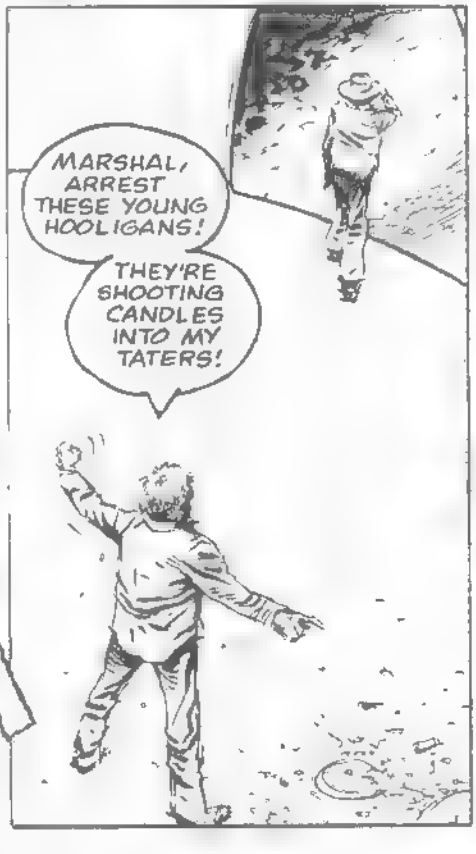
FORGET ABOUT KLOOG, IT'S DIANNE WHO NEEDS HELP NOW.
BUT WHEN THIS IS OVER... THE LAWAGON'S GOT TO GO INTO THE SHOP FOR A COMPLETE CHECKUP.
WELL, THERE'S THE DAMN REPAIR GUY FINALLY.
ABOUT TIME... LET'S GET OUT TO MY LAWAGON!
SORRY, CHUM, CAN'T CARRY NO PASSENGERS ON MY SCOOTER.
BUREAU'S RIGGED IT... SO IF YOU HOP ON WITH ME, IT DON'T GO.
LISTEN, I'M GOOD AT FIXING THESE BABIES...
...I'LL HAVE YOUR CRATE FOR YOU BY MORNING.
MORNING? DON'T GIVE ME THAT!
YOU BREAK MY ARM, CHUM, I CAN'T FIX IT AT ALL.

DIANNE IS DANGER...
...AND ALL I CAN DO IS SIT!
RELAX, CHUM. COULD BE I'LL PATCH UP YOUR BUGGY FAST.

AN HOUR PASSES, AND ANOTHER...
EXCUSE ME, SIR. WE PUT MONEY IN THE CANDLE SLOT...
...BUT NO CANDLE POPPED UP. DO YOU KNOW--
WHAP IT WITH YOUR FIST.

AH! HERE COMES 203
BAM BAM

OOPS!
LEAPIN' LUNA!
BAM BAM


MARSHAL, ARREST THESE YOUNG HOOLIGANS!
THEY'RE SHOOTING CANDLES INTO MY TATERS!

NOTHING WORKS RIGHT ANYMORE!
WHOLE DING DANG PLANET'S ON THE FRITZ!

REPORTING FOR DUTY, SIR!
SHIPSHAPE AND READY FOR ACTION!
WHERE'S THAT NITWIT REPAIRMAN?
WHY'D HE SEND YOU BACK ALONE?
OH, I SAW THROUGH HIM, SIR.
SHALL I PROCEED TO TOWNTEN?
YEAH, AND QUICK!
BUT WHAT DO YOU MEAN ABOUT--
SHELDON KLOOG WON'T BOTHER US ANYMORE, SIR!
KLUNT!
REMAINS OF SHELDON KLOOG
EARTHLY REMAINS OF SHELDON KLOOG
HE WAS DISGUISED AS A REPAIRMAN, BUT I TOOK CARE OF HIM!
LORD! THIS THING'S STILL ON THE BLINK!
THING IS... I NEED THIS DAMN CAR!
ONCE DIANNE'S SAFE...THEN THE LAWAGON'LL HAVE TO GO INTO THE SHOP.
BUT NOT NOW.
GOOD WORK, 203!

IN LESS THAN TWO HOURS CLEMENS' LAWAGON FOUND OTTERSON'S CAR...
...ENGINE BURNED OUT AND ABANDONED OFF A WOODLAND ROAD.
MAN AND WOMAN WENT THIS WAY ON FOOT, SIR.
OKAY, GOOD, LET'S FIND 'EM!
WE WILL, SIR. IT'S A CINCH!
SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, SIR. THEY'RE IN THOSE CAVES UP THERE.
CAN'T SNEAK UP ON HIM...
SO, OKAY. TURN ON THE SPOTS AND THE LOUD-SPEAKERS.
OTTERSON, THIS IS MARSHAL CLEMENS. WE KNOW YOU'RE UP THERE!
WE'LL CHECK OUT EACH CAVE IF WE HAVE TO... BETTER GIVE UP NOW!

HE'S TOSSING SOME-THING...
LOOKS LIKE ITS...
DIANNE!
SHE HIT THAT LEDGE! QUICK! SHOOT ME A LINE UP THERE!
CHONK!
YESSIR, AT ONCE, SIR!
WASN'T MUCH OF A FALL..
...SHE'LL BE ALIVE.
HELL! JUST A BUNDLE OF CLOTHES!
HE'S TRYING TO OUTFOX US!

YEAH, THERE HE GOES!
DOWN THERE!
CLEM, PLEASE..
DON'T LET HIM HURT ME!
HOLD IT, OTTERSON, OR I---
ALL AT ONCE THE LAWAGON RETRACTS THE LINE AND...
EMERGENCY!
EMERGENCY!
BLAST! THERE GOES MY KILGUN!
IDIOT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

THERE THEY WERE BELOW...
...OTTERSON AND DIANNE.
HEY, I'VE GOT TO GET DOWN THERE!
SEND BACK THE ROPE!
BUT THEN HE LOST HIS HOLD AND...
...FELL DOWN AND OUT!
CLEMENS CAME TO REMEMBERING SOMETHING...
HE'D HEARD A SCREAM... JUST BEFORE HE PASSED OUT.
WHERE ARE THEY? WHERE'S DIANNE?

ATTENTION, PLEASE! THIS IS A LAW BUREAU ANNOUNCE-MENT.
SHELDON KLOOG AND HIS FEMALE ACCOMPLICE HAVE BEEN CAPTURED, TRIED, SEN-TENCED AND EXECUTED.
YOU CRAZY DAMN MACHINE!
YOU KILLED DIANNE!
NO YOU DON'T, KLOOG!
END

VEITCH
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THE DESTINY OF THE DINOSAURS

FEW PEOPLE AT PENNSYLANIA UNIVERSITY KNOW ABOUT THE TEMPORAL BARRIER PROJECT. FEWER CARE. WHEN PROFESSOR LESTER CLEMENT RECEIVED HIS FEDERAL GRANT TEN YEARS AGO, THERE HAD BEEN A BRIEF FLURRY OF INTEREST. THEN, CLEMENT'S PROJECT FADED FROM THE PUBLIC'S ATTENTION.

BUT CLEMENT KEPT WORKING. FIVE YEARS AGO, HE USED A PORTION OF HIS GRANT TO HIRE AN ASSISTANT, ENGINEER JACK FOSTER, TO BUILD THE WONDROUS MACHINE OF CLEMENT'S THEORIES.

LESTER CLEMENT HAD INVESTED THIRTY YEARS OF HIS LIFE IN AN OUTRAGEOUS ATTEMPT TO GRASP A GOAL MANY HAVE CONTEMPLATED THROUGHOUT HISTORY, THOUGH NONE HAVE EVER ATTEMPTED TO REACH BEFORE: TIME TRAVEL. AND NOW--DREAM, THEORY, AND HARDWARE HAVE MERGED IN ONE VERY AMBITIOUS ENTERPRISE. BUT EVEN THAT HISTORY-MAKING EVENT WILL SOON SLIP INTO THE BACKGROUND AS THESE TWO UNLIKELY VOYAGERS UNCOVER...

JACK I'VE DECIDED TO SKIP THE SHORT TEST RUNS WE SPOKE OF, AND GO ALL THE WAY. AS SOON AS THE CHRONAL CAPSULE IS PACKED, WE'RE GOING BACK TO THE AGE OF REPTILES.

BUT, PROFESSOR, WE NEED TO TAKE THIS ONE STEP AT A TIME. THINK OF THE RISK IN TAKING A MULTI-MILLION YEAR JUMP INTO THE PAST!

THERE'S NO SAFE WAY TO TEST THE MACHINE. BESIDES, YOU BUILT THE SPHERE AND TOLD ME IT WAS READY FOR ANYTHING.
WELL, SURE... BUT I'M A STAUNCH ADHERENT OF MURPHY'S LAW: IF ANYTHING CAN GO WRONG IT WILL. AND TO BE STUCK MILLIONS OF YEARS IN THE PAST...
LOOK, IF THE MACHINE BREAKS DOWN ANYWHERE IN THE PAST, WE'RE SUNK SO WHY NOT SIMPLY GO FOR BROKE?
MAYBE BEING STUCK ONLY A HUNDRED YEARS BACK WOULDN'T BE SO BAD. THE AIR AND WATER WOULD BE BETTER, RIGHT?
NOT NECESSARILY. OF COURSE THERE WEREN'T ANY FACTORIES OR CARS. BUT THE CHANCE OF DISEASE, IMPURE FOOD AND WATER WERE FAR GREATER AND MEDICINE'S COME A LONG WAY, TOO.
BES DES, MY DREAM HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO GO WHERE NO OTHER HAS EVER BEEN. I COULD SOONER STOP BREATHING THAN PASS UP A CHANCE TO SEE A LIVING DINOSAUR.
THINK OF IT--ACTUAL DINOSAURS... ALIVE! CREATURES WHO DOMINATED THE EARTH FOR A HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION YEARS, AND WE'LL BE SEEING THEM IN THE FLESH! LORD, WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY!

DAYS LATER, A JOURNEY WHICH MEN CONCEIVE OF ONLY AS PUREST FANCY BEGINS IN EARNEST REALITY.
WE'LL MAKE SOME BRIEF STOPS ALONG THE WAY AND RECORD WHAT WE SEE. WE'LL NEED ALL THE PROOF WE CAN GET, SO THEY DON'T HAVE US LOCKED UP WHEN WE GET BACK.
I'M GETTING ALL THIS ON FILM, JACK. INCREDIBLE--THE ACTUAL SHIPS OF COLUMBUS SAILING TO THE NEW WORLD! IN ITS OWN WAY, NO LESS A FEAT OF INGENUITY THAN WHAT WE'RE DOING.
I'VE BEEN CALLED A CRACKPOT FOR YEARS BECAUSE I BELIEVED IN THIS PROJECT--AND I BELIEVED IN IT WITH MY WHOLE BODY AND SOUL
AS DID I, PROFESSOR. DESPITE THE RIBBING I USED TO TAKE, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN AN HONOR TO SERVE UNDER YOU
A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE EATING A LOT OF WORDS WHEN WE GET BACK, JACK. THAT IS, IF THEY CAN PICK THEIR JAWS UP OFF THE FLOOR LONG ENOUGH TO CHEW
IT'S FUNNY. THE GOVERNMENT DIDN'T EVEN THINK ENOUGH OF THE PROJECT TO MAKE IT TOP SECRET. I WONDER WHAT'LL HAPPEN NOW!
CAVEMEN, SIR! WE'RE GETTING CLOSE!

WOOLLY MAMMOTHS, SIR. WE'RE IN THE AGE OF MAMMALS DURING ITS VERY NASCENT STAGES. ONE CHRONAL ADJUSTMENT SHOULD DO IT.
JACK! THIS CAN'T BE! A SPACESHIP IN THE AGE OF DINOSAURS!
WHAT DO YOUR INSTRUMENTS SAY?
ALL READINGS INDICATE WE'RE SMACK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MESOZOIC ERA--THE VERY HEIGHT OF DINOSAUR DOMINANCE. THERE'S NO MISTAKE

THE TIME SPHERE SHOULD BE SAFE IN THE ROOTS OF THIS HUGE PLANT. WE HAVE TO GET CLOSER AND FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON
FOSTER--THAT DINOSAUR, IT MUST BE SOME UNKNOWN SPECIES WE'VE NEVER DISCOVERED THE REMAINS OF
AND--WAIT-- LOOK! I-IT'S CARRYING A PIECE OF PAPER THAT LOOKS LIKE SOME SORT OF BLUEPRINT.
EVERYTHING IS RIGHT ON SCHEDULE, SIR. THE FLEET IS NEARLY READY FOR TAKE-OFF
AND NONE TOO SOON. IT'S GETTING TOO CHILLY FOR COMFORT.
JACK, I'M RECEIVING THEIR THOUGHTS--TELEPATHICALLY THAT'S HOW THEY COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER AND IT WAS THEY WHO BUILT THE SPACESHIPS.

I'M TRYING TO CONTACT THEM MENTALLY, EVEN IF IT'S DANGEROUS...WE CAN'T PASS UP THIS CHANCE TO COMMUNICATE
BUT I DON'T SEEM ABLE TO GET *THROUGH* TO THEM. AND NOW THEY'RE GETTING SET TO LEAVE.
MAYBE WE CAN REACH THEM WITH A LOUDSPEAKER. I'LL RIG ONE UP FROM THE RADIO.
FOR YEARS, SCIENTISTS HAVE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT *BECAME* OF THESE MIGHTY SAURIANS. MOST OF FIGURED THE WORLD BECAME TOO COLD AND KILLED THEM. WHO COULD *EVER* HAVE IMAGINED THIS?!
I'LL START WITH SOME LOUD BEEPS COUNTING FROM ONE TO FOUR, THEN CALL TO THEM
BEEPBEEP!
BEEPBEEPBEEP!
BEEPBEEP
HELLO, CAN YOU HEAR ME?

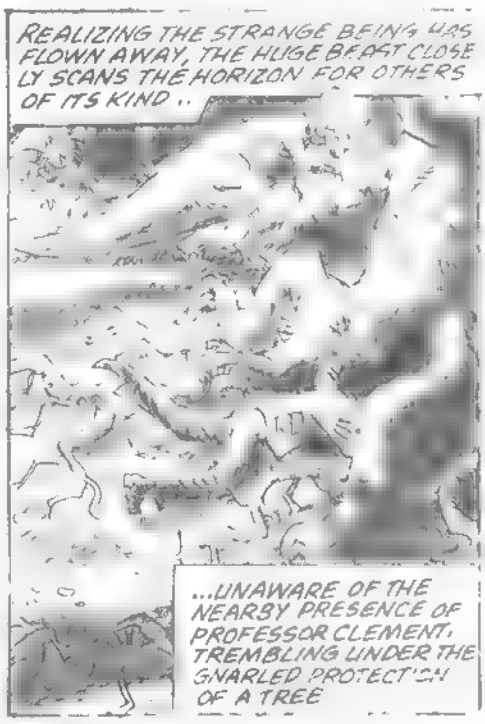
THEY DIDN'T HEAR US, DAMN IT! THEY'RE LEAVING!
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?!
HOLD IT--ONE OF THEM'S SEEN US, AND IT'S HEADING THIS WAY
JACK, IT'S INTELLIGENT. PERHAPS WE SHOULD STAY AND REASON WITH IT.
YOU CAN TALK THINGS OUT OVER A CUP OF COFFEE IF YOU LIKE, PROFESSOR, BUT I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE NOW!

SPLIT UP, JACK! IT CAN'T GO IN TWO DIRECTIONS AT ONCE!
I'M HEADING FOR THE CHRONAL CAPSULE, SIR!

NOW, IF I CAN JUST GET THIS CRATE MOVING WITHOUT UNINTENTIONALLY SLIPPING BACK INTO THE TIMESTREAM...
...IF I SHOULD START TO FADE OUT, PROFESSOR CLEMENT WOULD BE LOST HERE, FOREVER. I'D NEVER FIND MY WAY BACK TO THIS EXACT MOMENT IN TIME.

DEFTLY, THE YOUNG ENGINEER'S FINGERS PLAY AT THE FINE CONTROLS AND SOON THE STRANGE CRAFT RISES SHAKILY INTO THE SKY.
--AND STRAIGHT TOWARD THE SLAVERING JAWS OF THE MOST FEARSOME PREDATOR TO EVER STALK THE EARTH.

BUT WITH A SUDDEN BURST OF SPEED, THE CAPSULE DARTS SWIFTLY AWAY FROM ITS ALL-BUT-CERTAIN DOOM, AS THE RAZOR-SHARP TEETH OF THE ENRAGED REPTILE CLOSE ON LITTLE MORE THAN AN EASILY SNAPPED TREE BRANCH.


REALIZING THE STRANGE BEING HAS FLOWN AWAY, THE HUGE BEAST CLOSELY SCANS THE HORIZON FOR OTHERS OF ITS KIND..
...UNAWARE OF THE NEARBY PRESENCE OF PROFESSOR CLEMENT, TREMBLING UNDER THE GNARLED PROTECTION OF A TREE

WHAT IN GOD'S NAME HAVE WE GOTTEN OURSELVES INTO? WE DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST THOSE THINGS
AND THE WORST PART OF IT IS-- THEY'RE NOT IGNORANT BRUTES. THEY'RE NOT HUNTING US FOR FOOD..
...THEY THINK WE'RE GOING TO INTERFERE WITH THEIR PLANNED DEPARTURE OF EARTH FOR SOME UNKNOWN DESTINATION.
HOW CAN WE MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND WE ONLY WANT TO SPEAK WITH THEM --TO LEARN FROM THEM HOW?
SO THIS IS WHAT IT'S COME TO. THE CHANCE TO MAKE SCIENTIFIC HISTORY OF A KIND UNPRECEDENTED..
..TO CONVERSE WITH BEINGS FROM THE DAWN OF TIME...BEINGS WE'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED WERE FAR LESS INTELLIGENT THAN OURSELVES--
--YET WHOSE VERY MANNER OF COMMUNICATING IS LIGHT YEARS BEYOND OURS.
AND I'VE BLOWN IT. NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW WHAT WE'VE UNCOVERED... AND I'LL DIE HERE, STILL A LAUGHING STOCK BACK HOME.
PRO FESSOR! GET IN, QUICKLY!
WHA-- JACK IS THAT YOU?
PLEASE, SIR, WE'VE BEEN SPOTTED AGAIN. THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE.
I'M COMING, MY BOY, I'M COMING. YOU MUST REALIZE--TEACHING IN A UNIVERSITY DOESN'T EXACTLY PREPARE ONE FOR THIS SORT OF PHYSICAL BUFFETING.

BARE INSTANTS SEPARATE THE CHRONAL CAPSULE'S ASCENT FROM THE THUNDROUS APPROACH OF THE GREAT SAURIAN--
--WHOSE HELPLESS FRUSTRATION AT THE FLIGHT OF THE AIRBORNE ORB IS MATCHED ONLY BY THE FEELING OF RELIEF EXPERIENCED BY THE TWO MEN INSIDE THE GLOBE.
FEW WORDS ARE SPOKEN AS THE CRAFT IS CAUGHT IN THE TURBULENT TIMESTREAM, AND WHISKED FORWARD, THROUGH THE ENDLESS CENTURIES
...AND TO THE INEVITABLE RISE OF MAN AND HIS MUCH VAUNTED WORKS
THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD SEEM TO FORM FROM THE VERY AIR ITSELF.
BATTLES AND BLOODSHED AND MEN'S DYING WORDS PASS BY IN A DIZZYING ARRAY OF ADVANCES AND RETREATS.
THE COSTUMES DIFFER, BUT THE HORROR REMAINS THE SAME, AS MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN IS THERE FOR THE TWO SICKENED TRAVELERS TO SEE.
SOON, AERIAL ARMADAS SURGE THROUGH THE TEEMING SKIES, AS MAN'S QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE TAKES HIM BEYOND HIS PLANETARY CRADLE ITSELF...
...TO THE MOON, AND NOW, THROUGH THE DARKLING TUNNEL OF TIME.

AND THEN, IT IS OVER, WITH A GENTLE NUDGE THAT PLACES THE INCREDIBLE MACHINE BACK IN ITS PLACE OF BIRTH.
WE'VE DONE IT, PROFESSOR. WE'RE BACK WITH A STORY TO TELL THAT'S GOING TO SHAKE EVERY NOTION THAT SCIENTISTS HOLD DEAR.
WHAT DO WE DO NOW? DO WE REPORT THIS TO THE GOVERNMENT--OR GO TO THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY WITH OUR FINDINGS?
NOT YET. WAIT. I--I HAVE TO THINK.
I PICKED UP CERTAIN IDEAS WHILE WE "EAVESDROPPED" ON THE DINOSAURS. APPARENTLY, THEY LIVED SIMPLE LIVES, DESPITE THEIR GREAT INTELLECT. THEY LEFT NO TOOLS, AND OBVIOUSLY NO TRACE OF THEMSELVES--
--UNLESS WE'VE MISINTERPRETED PALEONTOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES FROM THE START.
THEY RULED THE WORLD FAR LONGER THAN MAN HAS SINCE. THEY'D STILL RULE IT IF THE TEMPERATURE HADN'T DROPPED.
I WONDER. SUCH A SPECIES, IF NECESSARY, MIGHT EVEN BE CAPABLE OF--NO, I DON'T DARE EVEN CONTEMPLATE THAT.
ONE WEEK LATER.
SO, JACK, I'M SORRY ABOUT BEING SO MYSTERIOUS A FEW DAYS AGO. IN THE MEANTIME, I'VE PREPARED MY REPORT.
I DON'T KNOW IF WE'LL BE BELIEVED, BUT--
PROFESSOR, YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH THE "GREENHOUSE EFFECT," RIGHT?
OF COURSE. IT'S THE GRADUAL WARMING OF THE ATMOSPHERE DUE TO AN INCREASE IN CARBON DIOXIDE--FROM PLANTS, POLLUTION, ETC. WHY?

I'M THINKING WHAT I'LL BET YOU WERE A WEEK AGO, WHEN WE GOT BACK. THE DINOSAURS LEFT BECAUSE IT GOT TOO COLD FOR THEM.
BUT SUPPOSE, NOW THAT IT'S GOTTEN WARMER OVER THE PAST THOUSAND CENTURIES--
COME OUTSIDE. YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT. THE SKY IS FULL OF SHIPS--SPACE SHIPS!
LIKE PROPS FROM THE MOST BIZARRE SCIENCE FICTION MOVIE COME TO LIFE, THEY DESCEND IN A ROAR OF BURSTING FLAME.
PROFESSOR, THEY--THEY'VE--
YES, JACK. THEY'VE COME BACK. HEAVEN HELP US ALL. THEY'VE COME BACK.
IT'S ON THE RADIO! THESE SHIPS ARE LANDING ALL OVER THE WORLD.

BY HROTHGAR! WE LEAVE THE EARTH FOR A FEW MILLENIA UNTIL IT WARMS UP AND THOSE BLASTED MAMMALS ARE OVERUNNING THINGS.
LOOKS LIKE WE'LL HAVE TO *ELIMINATE* THEM SO THIS PLACE IS FIT TO LIVE IN AGAIN.
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN COUNTLESS AGES, THE GROUND ONCE AGAIN TREMBLES TO THE AWESOME TREAD OF SAURIAN FEET.
THE END.

VEITCH
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